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from the expression of such an opinion by the overawing *dictum* of COLERIDGE as to the "Alchemist." The "Staple of News," too, has been rescued from the comparative oblivion into which the sweeping condemnation of DRYDEN long since plunged this really 'splendid comedy'; whilst the undue estimation of the "New Inn," the result of CHARLES LAMB's judicious selection, is moderately corrected. It is for independent judgments such as these, in which the value of "opinion untrammelled by the authority of great names" manifests itself, that our critic deserves our utmost gratitude.

Mr. SWINBURNE does adequate justice to JONSON's series of graceful and lightly poetical masques, upon which the poet assuredly lavished all the wealth of his intellect and energy; and devotes the second part of his "study" to the miscellaneous works of JONSON, including the really notable collections, the "Forest" and "Underwoods." The critic calls attention to JONSON's extraordinary versatility as witnessed in these poems, to his "energy and purity, clearness and sufficiency, simplicity and polish"; distinguishes his chief blemish as stiffness rather than the proverbial ruggedness; and adds: "if ruggedness of verse is a damaging blemish, stiffness of verse is a destructive infirmity." Mr. SWINBURNE assigns to JONSON for his miscellaneous poems no more than a third or fourth rank among Elizabethans.

Finally, a considerable portion of the whole book is devoted to a consideration of that extraordinary "collection of notes or observations on men and morals, on principles and on facts," Jonson's 'Explorata' or 'Discoveries.' Mr. SWINBURNE makes the following just comparison between Lord BACON's famous 'Essays' and JONSON's 'Discoveries.' "The dry, curt style of the statement, docked and trimmed into sentences that are regularly snapped off or snipped down at the close of each deliverance, is as alien and as far from the fresh and vigorous spontaneity of the poet's as is the trimming and hedging morality of the essay on "Simulation and Dissimulation" from the spirit and instinct of the man who "of all things loved to be called honest." There can be no doubt of the entire truth of

this statement, extraordinary as it may appear to those unfamiliar with JONSON's admirable prose. Indeed it has long been a matter of wonder to the few that have ever read a word of JONSON's 'Discoveries' that this rich treasure of our literature, together with all its author's matchless dramatic achievements, should be suffered to lie practically unedited and corrupt, whilst edition after edition of the Baconian apothegms flood the markets with a crabbed style and a worldly morality.

We can not but feel that, taken all in all, Mr. SWINBURNE has done ample justice to one of the greatest names in the annals of our literature. He has done more: he has called attention to the superlative excellence of JONSON's prose, and has sought to explain that difficult problem, why the highest talent, immense learning, unusual versatility and Titanic industry, may be lavished on the work of a lifetime and yet give their possessor a place second to some reckless sonneteer who sings because he must. With all the dictator's matchless equipment, without doubt there was many an humble devotee new "sealed of the tribe of Ben," whose vernal offerings possessed not only "color, form, variety, fertility and vigor," but that last of the graces, fragrance itself. From the putative "The Case is Altered" to that graceful but broken torso, "The Sad Shepherd," we have a beautiful, diverse and well-wrought series, all cut from the same difficult quarry, all shaped with the design of an artist and wrought with the zeal and industry of a faithful craftsman. Whether the statue of the great Roman favorite is before us, the sardonic visage of "The Fox," or the sylvan tracery of some delicate masque, all is well conceived and carefully executed; but all is hewn out of the same unpromising material. It is rarely that we are cheated out of a sense of the weight and the color of stone.

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Histoire de la littérature néerlandaise en Belgique par J. STECHER, Professeur à l'Université de Liège, membre de l'Académie. Bruxelles: J. Leblège & Cie, 1887. 8vo, pp. viii, 370.

Though this work appeared more than

three years ago and was then briefly noticed by the *Athenæum* in its half-yearly review of contemporary literature, we do not think it is too late to present it to the readers of MOD. LANG. NOTES; for we are convinced that it has lost nothing of its interest, and that it is still in every respect worthy of the attention of the literary world. Previously to Mr. STECHER there have been only two authors who have written, in French, histories of Dutch literature, M. ALBERDINGK THYM: 'De la littérature néerlandaise à ses différentes époques,' Amsterdam 1854; and M. SNELLAERT: 'Histoire de la littérature flamande' in the "National Library," published under the patronage of the government. But these two writers, treating of Dutch literature in general, have both neglected that part which belongs to the Flemish provinces of Belgium; and their works, which, moreover, are hardly abreast of the science of today, are now out of print. We have, therefore, no hesitation in saying that Mr. STECHER's work supplies a real want.

Mr. STECHER, who has occupied for nearly forty years the chair of French Literature in the University of Liège, has organized there, in addition, a course of lectures on the literature of the Netherlands, a course with which he has been intrusted for a number of years past. A literary man and a philologist, he is by professional experience and ability, as well as by personal studies, the man best qualified to write a critical history of Dutch literature in Belgium. Mr. STECHER has read and submitted to searching criticism all the works which have appeared on the subject in recent years; and he now gives us the result of his labors in a handsome volume of unquestionable literary value. To appreciate fully the wealth of matter so methodically arranged by the author, it will be sufficient to cast a glance over the index, which is worth copying here:

1. Les Origines. Le véritable point de départ;
2. Poésie narrative du Moyen Age flamand;
3. Versification thioise. Epopée bourgeoise;
4. Poésie des cloîtres. Romancero flamand;
5. La Poésie didactique;
6. Littérature dramatique au Moyen Age;

7. Littérature gnomique. Origine de la prose;
8. Les Rhétoriciens.—La Transition;
9. La Renaissance et la Réforme;
10. Les Flamands en Hollande.—La Littérature de l'Emigration;
11. L'Isolement;
12. La Décadence;
13. La Littérature flamande sous la domination française;
14. La Période d'Union Néerlandaise;
15. Indépendance et Renaissance.

It is easy to see from this analysis what an interesting and fertile study the work under review offers. We abstain from entering into details here and from drawing the attention of our readers to this or that part of the work: space would fail us. We will merely mention the remarkable chapters in which Mr. STECHER traces with a masterly hand the picture of the intense intellectual life of the Flemish people at the great epochs of their political history; when that valiant race was struggling with indomitable energy to acquire civil and political liberty, and when, later on, it was struggling for liberty of conscience. In conclusion, we see unfolded in all its exuberance the new intellectual and moral life of the Flemish provinces, which, after the lethargy caused by subjection to a foreign yoke, have in modern times given fresh proof of having recovered their liberty with the constitution of an independent Belgium—an awakening prepared, it is true, by the fifteen years of their union with the Netherlands of the North, under the sceptre of an enlightened prince.

More than once have we seen in English periodicals expressions of regret that works on Dutch subjects written in Dutch could not find so wide a circle of readers as they deserve, since a knowledge of the Dutch language is not sufficiently common with the reading public; it should, therefore, be particularly gratifying to scholars to receive a work of scientific character on Flemish Literature, written in excellent literary form in a language understood in every civilized country.

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